

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of the Claims

Claims 1-13 (Canceled)

14. (Original) Method of making a sputter target comprising:

- a) providing an Me powder comprising a member selected from groups IVB, VB, VIB and VIII of the periodic table;
- b) providing Si_3N_4 powder;
- c) providing a sintering aid selected from MgO and SiO_2 ;
- d) blending said Me powder, Si_3N_4 powder and sintering aid to form a blend;
- e) pressure consolidating said blend under heated conditions for a time sufficient to form a consolidated blend having an actual density of greater than 95% of the theoretical density.

15. (Original) Method as recited in claim 14 further comprising machining said pressure consolidated blend from said step (e) to final desired shape.

16. (Original) Method as recited in claim 14 wherein said blend comprises from about 40 - about 80 atomic percent Me, about 60 - about 20 atomic percent Si_3N_4 with said the atomic percent of said Si_3N_4 and said Me equaling about 100 atomic percent, said sintering aid being MgO present in an amount of between about 0.05-6 weight percent based on the weight of said Si_3N_4 .

17. (Original) Method as recited in claim 16 wherein Me is W.

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18. (Original) Method as recited in claim 16 further comprising conducting said pressure consolidating step (e) in an inert gaseous atmosphere.

19. (Original) Method as recited in claim 18 wherein said pressure is greater than about 1 atmosphere.

20. (Original) Method as recited in claim 19 wherein pressure consolidation is conducted at temperatures of about 900°C-1700°C.